Memo Control Form

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CLASSIFICATION OF MEMO (OCI)

☐ NOTICE NO 26-67 COVER SHEET ☐ DISSEM AUTHORIZATION

MEMO NO Unnumbered DATE 2 March 1967 Due Dates: D/OCI Review _____ Dissem ~~2 March 1967~~

SUBJECT: The French National Legislative Elections

REQUESTED OR ORIGINATED BY: Self-initiated

PURPOSE: For background--elections to be held 5 March

ASSIGNED TO: WE [redacted] GRAPHICS COORDINATE OUTSIDE OCI _____
and Lutz

25X1

DISSEMINATION

☐ Preliminary (DDI, D/OCI, and their staffs)

☐ Category_____Recommended to D/OCI

☐ Category_____Finally Authorized By: _____

☐ Specified Other ~~Typescript~~

25X1 0 and several to [redacted] for [redacted] 25X1
Mr. Gourley (cy. subsequently went to Mr. Procter (acting DDI)

Cat. E (Routine internal and extern...)
Cat. D (Routine internal CIA only) 1 to desk
Cat. B (Subcabinet and internal CIA) 2 MCO
Cat. A (Elite--External top officials only and internal CIA)

FORM 8-66 2024 OBSOLETE PREVIOUS EDITION

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2 March 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The French National Legislative Elections

1. Elections will be held on 5 and 12 March to replace the first French National Assembly to complete its five-year term since before World War II. The number of deputies will be increased from 482 to 487* as a result of the creation of new constituencies in the Paris area. Five national political groupings as well as a number of minor parties and independent candidates will compete for National Assembly seats.

2. Running under a Fifth Republic label are the official Gaullist party, the Union for the New Republic and Democratic Labor Party (UNR/UDT); the Gaullist-allied Independent Republicans of former Finance Minister Valery Giscard d'Estaing; and a number of deputies who consistently supported the government in the last Assembly. The Fifth Republic grouping, like the Communist Party (PCF)--the second major formation--will run candidates in every district. Three other groups are presenting more than the 75 candidates required for recognition as national parties entitled to TV time. They are the Unified Socialists, whose most famous luminary is ex-premier Pierre Mendes-France, with 115 aspirants; Francois Mitterrand's Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left with 430 candidates; and Jean Lecanuet's Democratic Center with 360 candidates.

3. Most significant of the minor formations is a dissident Gaullist grouping composed primarily of those who failed to gain official endorsement as Fifth Republic

*Only 486 deputies will be elected in March. A deputy from French Somaliland will be elected later if the territory opts to retain its ties with France in a 19 March referendum.

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candidates. If no candidate in a given constituency receives 50 percent of the votes on the first ballot--in 1962 only 96 deputies were so elected--a second round is held in which all candidates in that constituency who received at least ten percent of the registered vote are eligible to run again. The critical factor, then, is which candidates withdraw between rounds.

4. The odds remain slightly in favor of the Gaullists retaining their majority but with a loss of perhaps 10 to 12 percent of their current 280-member block. However, this estimate could be materially affected by various unresolved factors, including the continuing high percentage of undecided voters, the volatility of the French electorate, and the impact of De Gaulle's election-eve TV address. Recent polls show an over-all drop of 6.5 percent(from 43.5 percent to 37 percent) in the popularity of Gaullist candidates in the last four-week period, while both Federation and Communist candidates increased their support. The opposition, however, has failed effectively to exploit issues on which the Gaullists are vulnerable--particularly on issues which affect the voters' pocketbooks--and the government has skillfully marshalled its massive resources in support of its candidates.

5. The Gaullists will be particularly affected by the withdrawal policies which the Center and the PCF follow. By maintaining all of its candidates on the second round, regardless of whether they have any chance of winning, the Center could ensure that large numbers of its voters do not switch to the Gaullist camp, as happened in the 1965 presidential election. Lecanuet, however, hopes to work out reciprocal withdrawal arrangements with Gaullist candidates covering a number of districts. The Gaullists will also benefit if the PCF stands by its decision to refuse to withdraw in favor of any Center candidates. There have been indications, however, that the PCF may make exceptions to this rule in a few cases, as it did in the 1962 elections. Mitterand's Federation will also be greatly affected by PCF withdrawals, because over one half of its deputies owed their election in 1962 to Communist votes on the second round. The Communists, who concluded a loose electoral agreement with the Federation, agreed to withdraw in districts where they run behind the Federation. They are not committed to withdraw, however, in those instances where their candidates run ahead of the Federation but are less well placed to defeat the Gaullists.

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6. Opposition parties are incensed by De Gaulle's decision to make a final TV address on 4 March after the campaign officially closes, a decision presumably prompted by the general's alarm over the slippage in Gaullist standings. Although poll findings suggest that De Gaulle's February campaign speech had little or no effect in checking the slow but steady Gaullist decline, a well-reasoned last-minute appeal could swing to the government camp those voters still sitting on the fence. A swing of a small percentage of votes, equivalent to a few thousand, could have changed the results in some 80 to 90 constituencies in 1962.

7. Another factor adding to the uncertainty is whether the electorate will again, as it did in 1962, vote in effect for De Gaulle rather than his party, or whether it will be strongly influenced by local personalities and issues. Another unknown is whether those who vote for opposition candidates on the first round will switch--as they did in the presidential election--to the Gaullists on the second round reasoning that this is the "moment of truth." This factor operated in De Gaulle's favor during the presidential race, but a significant number of voters might support the opposition on both rounds on the ground that they are voting for individual deputies and not the president of the Republic.

8. Even if the Gaullists win, their majority will probably be reduced and they will be less responsive to De Gaulle's dictates. The Gaullist losses are expected to come from the ranks of the hard-core elements in the UNR; thus the voice of Giscard d'Estaing, who has already indicated areas of divergence from the official party line, should be greatly enhanced. If the Fifth Republic falls just short of an absolute majority, Jean Lecanuet would be in a hinge position regarding the formation of a government majority. Before De Gaulle makes any modifications in his European and Atlantic policies to entice Lecanuet, however, he can be expected to try to brazen it out with a minority government, confident the opposition will be unable to unite on a censure motion which would oblige the premier to resign.

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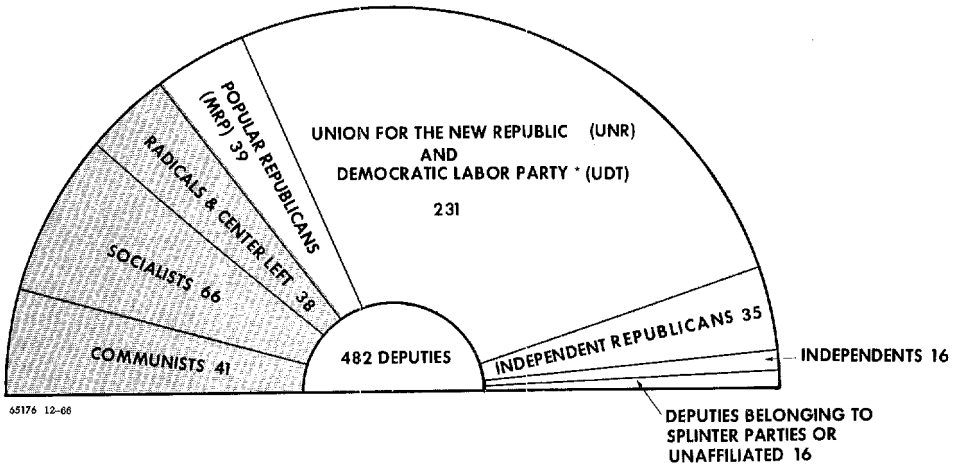
PARTY STRENGTHS IN FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Elected November 1962


POPULAR REPUBLICANS (MRP) 39
UNION FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC (UNR) AND DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY * (UDT) 231
RADICALS & CENTER LEFT 38
SOCIALISTS 66
COMMUNISTS 41
482 DEPUTIES
INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS 35
INDEPENDENTS 16
DEPUTIES BELONGING TO SPLINTER PARTIES OR UNAFFILIATED 16
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**These Gaullist parties command a majority because of regular backing from Independent Republicans and occasional backing from Radicals and Popular Republicans.*

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MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPINGS IN FRANCE

GROUP	FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALIST LEFT	DEMOCRATIC CENTER	GAULLIST "FAMILY"
DATE OF FORMATION	December 1965	February 1966	
PRESIDENT	Francois Mitterrand	Jean Lecanuet	Jacques Baumel, UNR/UDT Valery Giscard d'Estaing, Independent Republicans
PARTICIPANTS	Socialist Party Radical Party Convention of Republican Institutions Political clubs	MRP Independent Party Political clubs	UNR UDT Independent Republicans
ORGANIZATIONAL AIM	To seek a common program and electoral strategy, while allowing participating parties to preserve separate identities	To fuse existing parties into organic union	Temporarily organized into Action Committee for the Fifth Republic for electoral purposes
ELECTORAL APPEAL	Return to parliamentary ascendency; program of wide-ranging economic and social change; moderate movement toward more independent foreign policy	Abolition of "personal rule"; foreign policy based on European and Atlantic cooperation; moderate forward movement in economic and social field	Institutional stability embodied in presidential system; independence in foreign policy; re-establishment of French "grandeur"; economic stabilization

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2 March 1967

Talking Paper for: "The French National Legislative Elections"

This memo is simply a primer on the forthcoming French elections (5-12 March). It is possible that some US officials have been overlooking the possibility (and only that) that De Gaulle might slump below an absolute majority.

Some or all of this material might be found in the press but perhaps those who have not been reading the press too carefully on this issue will find this account useful.

We are prepared to write a memo between rounds about the options open to De Gaulle if it looks as though there is a good chance he will lose his majority.

Recommend this typescript version with graphic be sent to ADDI for further dissemination at his discretion.

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